

was no money in the Treasury, and payment was refused. After six months had elapsed payment was offered, but on condition that the Government should retain half the profit of the commission! This Ouvrard and Wailenberghe refused, upon which the Treasury thought it most economical to pay nothing, and the debt remained unsettled. Notwithstanding this transaction Ouvrard and Wanlerberghe engaged to victual the navy, which they supplied for six years and three months. After the completion of these different services the debt due to them amounted to 68,000,000.

In consequence of the long delay of payment by the Treasury the disbursements for supplies of grain amounted at least to more than 40,000,000 ; and the difficulties which arose had a serious effect on the credit of the principal dealers with those persons who supplied them. The discredit spread and gradually reached the Treasury, the embarrassments of which augmented with the general alarm. Ouvrard, Wanlerberghe, and Seguin were the persons whose capital and credit rendered them most capable of relieving the Treasury, and they agreed to advance for that purpose 102,000,000 in return for which they were allowed bonds of the Receivers-General to the amount of 150,000,000. M. Desprez undertook to be the medium through which the 102,000,000 were to be paid into the Treasury, and the three partners transferred the bonds to him.

Spain had concluded a treaty with France, by which she was bound to pay a subsidy of 72,000,000 francs, and 32,000,000 had become due without any payment being made. It was thought advisable that Ouvrard should be sent to Madrid to obtain a settlement, but he was afraid that his business in Paris would suffer during his absence, and especially the transaction in which he was engaged with Desprez. The Treasury satisfied him on this point by agreeing to sanction the bargain with Desprez, and Ouvrard proceeded to Madrid. It was on this occasion he entered into the immense speculation for trading with Spanish America.

Spain wished to pay the 32,000,000 which were due to France as soon as

possible, but her coffers were empty,
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